



(U) Reflections from an American in Paris

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(S//SI) Voila! -- An NSAer completes her tour as SIGINT Liaison Officer in Paris.

(U) As I wrap up my tour in Paris looking out my window at the Eiffel Tower, I have been struggling to come up with the appropriate words to describe my tour without sounding like I am crowing. This is impossible. Let me begin by being totally honest. Folks, it truly doesn't get any better than this. In every way, both professionally and personally, this has been a great job; make that "the perfect job." As I look back on my dreams as a college student learning French, I could not even imagine that one day I would actually be sitting in the US Embassy in Paris using my French every day. Besides the actual location, what has made this job so special? The reasons are many, and on every level I have been satisfied with my experience here in France.

(S//SI) The primary reason for my satisfaction is the excellent relationship with our French partners. I arrived here in Paris in September of 2001. On my fifth day of work, I had just met one of our four partners (the DRM, la Direction de Renseignement Militaire -- France's Directorate of Military Intelligence) here in France and returned to the Embassy excited by how interesting and pleasant that encounter had been. I couldn't wait to get started in this job. The departing SLO, [REDACTED], and I sat down in our office (with the view!) to continue my training by going over the actions from the aforementioned meeting. As we logged on to the computer, a Station colleague told us that a plane had just crashed into a building in New York. I decided to go and take a look at CNN in the next room. I walked in to see that the entire Station was gathered around the television set. We watched together in horror as a second plane appeared on the screen headed for the tower.

(S//SI) Within an hour, the Chief of Station (COS) provided us with a plan of action. He had a particular reason to be worried as the Station had been working closely with DST (la Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire, or Directorate for Territorial Surveillance) all summer to monitor an Al Qai'da cell which was planning to blow up the US Embassy. The Station began a rotating shift operation, as the COS did not want all of us in the Embassy at the same time. He said we had to be able to continue to function with a core staff even if the Embassy was taken out. Station worked closely with the DST to put additional French security forces on detail to protect the Embassy and close the road adjacent to the Embassy (these measures still exist today). As this threat was a first heard for me, I was truly questioning why I had ever applied for this job in the first place. I was so worried about friends and family back in the USA that I just wanted to go home.

(S//SI) I am glad that I stayed. Many things changed on that day and none more profoundly than the intelligence relationship with the French. Within minutes of the attack, DGSE (la Direction G  n  rale de la S  curit   Ext  rieure, or General Directorate for External Security) was immediately on the phone expressing their sorrow and outrage at what happened. Both the DGSE and the DST immediately went to work providing whatever SIGINT and HUMINT they had or could acquire related to the attack. Over the next few months, DGSE for the first time provided NSA with raw voice cuts and technical information whenever there was a threat to a US person or facility.

(S//SI) This kernel of cooperation born from a horrific event has proved to be the building block of even closer, more cooperative SIGINT relations. I will not go into detail here, suffice it to say that we have moved from a very formal memo-passing relationship based on faxes signed by national authorities to one where we can send an "e-mail" message from a SIGINT analyst in the SID Africa shop to the computer desktop of an analyst in DSGE. Now that's progress! Progress is always a good reason for satisfaction.

(U//FOUO) So, besides progress in the partnership and good relations with the partner, what other reasons could I have for satisfaction? FAD [NSA/Foreign Affairs Directorate]. I have been extremely fortunate in having managers in FAD who not only listened to my concerns about the partnership but also gave me their support when I needed it most. This is a critical component when you are a one-man show in the field. Even though you are alone, you absolutely need the support of your management because you can't go it alone or do it alone. I have also had the unfailing support and help of my closest collaborator whom I jokingly call my other half, my CDO [Country Desk Officer], [REDACTED]. Finally, there has been the camaraderie of the other SLOs to get me through the rough times and their help and expertise when a new problem crops up on my CIA computer account!

(U//FOUO) However, job satisfaction doesn't just end at FAD. As a SLO, I have met and worked with many delegations from both SID and [IAD](#) who traveled here to meet with the partner. The issues have been varied but all are interesting, and the opportunity to hear these experts has increased my understanding of many areas of NSA that I have never come into contact with in previous assignments. We are a very diverse and complex organization with many talented individuals. By working in a CIA Station, I have learned more than I ever expected about HUMINT operations. Since an Embassy is really a microcosm of DC, even the absolute worst part of this job (serving as the Embassy duty officer) has had one redeeming feature: there is no better way to learn about State Department operations and the other agencies and departments in our government.

(U) And so to wrap this up, living in Paris has been great for all the reasons I decided to come here and it has been great for many reasons that I never expected. And what will I remember most? I will never forget the day I watched a small, elegantly dressed, white-haired, French woman in her eighties struggle across Place de la Concorde with her cane in one hand and one long-stemmed white rose in the other. It took her a long time to make the journey, but as she neared the Embassy I could see on her face the same determination and force of spirit that one sees on the face of an Olympic athlete. For she too, had a mission; she had come to lay a rose in front of the Embassy. It was September 12, 2001.



(U) French army parachutist is seen near the rooftop of the Invalides during the "Nation-Defense" days in Paris (Reuters)

(S//SI) This article is reprinted from the Foreign Affairs Digest, September edition. See also an earlier article from [REDACTED] titled "[\(U\) Hostage Support -- Another Success Story](#)" regarding NSA support to the French.

(U//FOUO) If YOU work overseas and have an interesting story to tell, please contact SID *today*!

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